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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5287
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0171
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9855
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 6799
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 4867
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3498
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0568
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3590
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2667
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7366
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5100
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1767
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000188

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: RULING PARTY LURES 8 MORE CROSSOVERS

REF: A. COLOMBO 0175

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 0170

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Eight out of nine Members of Parliament (MPs) from the Buddhist monk-based Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) announced on January 31 that they have joined the Government. JHU MP Venerable Omalpe Sobitha Thero resigned to allow the party's Policy Formulator, Champika Ranawaka, to become an MP. Ranawaka, the first layman JHU MP, will be sworn in as the Minister of Environment on February 1. Ranawaka is not known to have any experience in environmental issues. The ninth JHU MP, Venerable Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero, will function as an independent member in the Parliament but will continue to vote with the Government, according to the JHU's Administrative Secretary.

[1](#)2. (C) The official "crossover" of these MPs does not affect the party's numbers in Parliament, since the JHU MPs were already voting with the Government. It does, however, make the Government's slim majority in parliament somewhat more stable. The JHU was one party that local observers thought might threaten to withdraw support, leaving the Government with a majority of only one. Non-Cabinet Minister of Justice Dilan Perera told POL FSN that the JHU crossovers give the Government a stronger majority, making it harder for the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) to make trouble.

[1](#)3. (C) Other Buddhist activists are critical of the JHU's move to join the Government. One Embassy contact argued that it will be difficult for the JHU to push the GSL to "protect Buddhism" if they are working from within the Government. The JHU also may find it difficult now to demand the removal of the Norwegians as facilitators.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: Founded in 2004 by a group of Buddhist monks, the JHU is a Sinhalese chauvinist party. It is on the opposite side from the US on most issues. The party attempted to pass a constitutional amendment declaring Buddhism the State religion, and it does not believe in powersharing as a solution to the conflict. Its official partnership with the Government does not bode well for the

peace process. However, if being part of the Government appeases the JHU, it may spend less time criticizing the Government. The Government may have calculated that bringing in the JHU would be a reassuring gesture to its conservative constituency in the South following the crossover of the United National Party MPs.

BLAKE